

Solar power: Logan offers incentive for home systems

Salt Lake Tribune Editorial

Article Last Updated: 01/03/2008 07:13:56 PM MST

Free pollution-free electricity, compliments of the sun! It sounds like an offer you can't refuse. But who can afford it?

While residential solar-energy systems eventually pay for themselves, it takes years, make that decades.

A 1-kilowatt solar-powered system utilizing silicon panels and connected directly to the electrical grid will cost \$8,000-\$10,000 installed. And despite the hefty investment, it will only reduce your electric bill. A 5-kilowatt system, enough to power the average home, can cost \$35,000 or more, a prohibitive sum for most households.

But the price of soaking up the sun and converting it to electricity just got a lot cheaper for the 17,000 customers of Logan City Light & Power, thanks to a progressive City Council that approved the program last month.

Logan is offering residents a rebate of \$2,000 per kilowatt, with a maximum of \$6,000 for a 3-kilowatt system, for installing residential solar-energy systems. When added to federal and state tax credit programs, which can provide a combined tax break of up to \$4,000, the owner of a 1-kilowatt system can expect to recoup the costs in about 20 years. And if you sell your home, solar-energy systems tend to increase the value.

But don't look at the program as a government handout. Everybody - not just the homeowners who tap into the \$100,000 incentive fund wins.

The city can reduce the amount of high-cost electricity it purchases on the spot market during peak summer demand, City Light & Power Director Jay Larsen said.

And the environment will benefit - think of it as a little less carbon-dioxide spewing, mercury-emitting coal on the fire at a commercial power plant. Concern about global warming and pollution from fossil-fuel power plants was the driving force behind the idea, Larsen explained.

The plan is drawing rave reviews from alternative-energy supporters, including Utah Clean Energy, a volunteer public-interest group that promotes energy efficiency and clean energy in the state.

"Logan is leading the way with energy efficiencies," said Sarah Wright, executive director at UCE.

It's an awesome idea, one that cities should mimic anywhere the sun shines.

Home solar-power systems can light up your life economically, and serve as a beacon for others who want to pursue clean-and-green energy strategies, and reduce their carbon footprint on the Earth.